

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR”

All THE YEAR ROUND

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JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

PART III. MISS DOYLE.

CHAPTER XVI. IN THE MIST.

A PLUNDERED dressing-room—a thievish valet. Sir Charles Bassett might see something dark and dangerous floating about beneath the muddy surface, but to the house in general the combination was nothing more than pleasantly exciting. To Phoebe herself, the discovery was indeed thrice confused confusion. That she had warned the proscribed nobleman of his peril, that she had eagerly given her watch to help a penniless lover to escape from his enemies, nobody, not even Sir Charles himself, knew better than she. A lucky sight, from behind her blind, of Stanislas crossing the terrace in the direction of the stables, a sudden impulse, a desperate resolution, a hurried flight into the park, a snatch of breathless talk—all this was on her consciousness, if not on her conscience, during the scene at the breakfast-table, and had made her conduct as peculiar as anybody could desire. But she had not been so mad as to carry her trinkets out into the park to be missed by her duenna; her watch she had given, but her jewels had been stolen. There at any rate Mrs. Hassock's clamour had been right; Sir Charles Bassett's silent assurance had been wrong. Nor had she given Stanislas her purse, that also she had left in her room when she hurried downstairs. What had become of them? Not so much as a suspicion entered her brain that a hero of romance, because he had been given a part of her treasures, therefore held himself entitled to make free with the whole. A

wicked, flourishing marquis might do such things, but not a count in disguise; for disguise is the very livery of Honour. To say that she did not suspect is almost to say too much, for it is in a manner to hint at a suspicion that did not come even near enough to her to be scouted and denied. Somebody must have taken these things; there were other servants in the house; but who? Yet she could not defend Stanislas without betraying him. And it was altogether desperately unlucky. The police would be at once upon the alert to catch a common thief, and would thus cut off every avenue of escape from Stanislas Adrianski. They would go out for a fox, and would find a lion. If only the real thief had been considerate enough to put off his or her coup till tomorrow! Stanislas would have been clear off by then, and the scent would have been led away.

She felt like anything but a heroine when she escaped at last from the informal court of enquiry in the library back to her bedroom. “The police”—she had heard the word spoken, and its very sound went far to vulgarise even the romance of a hunted patriot and an imprisoned maiden. Had Sir Charles summoned his serfs and retainers by bugle-horn to hunt an outlaw, she knew, or supposed she would have known, what to do. But to have a knight-errant tracked, and perhaps caught, by a county constable in a blue coat—that was beyond knowledge. And that blue coat with a stiff collar might find her watch upon the supposed valet in another hour. She would not be able to say, “That is not my watch;” for Mrs. Hassock could contradict her, and, even if she could bribe or persuade her duenna to silence, her monogram could not be persuaded or

bribed to disappear. She would not be able to say, "I, a young lady, made a present of my watch to Mr. Ralph Bassett's valet," because then she would have to say why. And yet, if she did not say so, Stanislas would escape the Siberian mines only to fall upon an English treadmill. And what should she write home—to her father? Some sort of letter must be written, and at once; and what in the world should she say?

And she had wasted tears over the sorrows of heroines who had never suffered from policemen, and postmen, and the hundred things which make, in these days, the career of a heroine difficult indeed. Once upon a time—to be as precisely exact in dates as possible—it would have been so easy to make great deeds marry with great desires. Now all was changed; and Phoebe felt that fate was growing too much for her, that things must be as they must be, and that she had been born terribly after her time. But this was only in the background. How soon would Stanislas Adrianski be brought handcuffed, like a common thief, between two common policemen to Cautleigh Hall? All she could do was to throw open her window, and from a curtained corner look out over the park, in a state of suspense beside which, she felt sure, all the heartaches of which she had ever read had been as nothing. Nay, less than nothing; for those hearts had ached with love, "And so do I!" cried Phoebe's. "That is all that is left me to do, and I will. I am in torture because I love Stanislas, and because we shall be parted, he to the mines, I to despair, and I shall never see him or hear his voice again." The fear felt curiously like hope; but, for that very reason, she gained the greater strength to keep on despairing, with all her might and main. As to the outward upshot, the arrest of Stanislas, her having to make a public choice between betraying him to the mines and leaving him to the treadmill, the exposure of her inner life, the confusion, the explosion, the ridicule worse than tragedy which must crown the drama of her destiny—all these made up a very different sort of fear, and compelled love and its despair to fight hard for their very lives.

Only through all Phoebe's follies, falsehoods, and fears, through all her feeble fancies, and phantom vanities, and savage ignorances, there ran the one ruling note which was, and had been from the beginning of her story, their end, their life,

their cause: "I'll be the highest I know of, and if I can't be all, I'll be all I can." Ralph Bassett had never said so much—Philip Nelson had never said more.

"So Miss Doyle has got a headache—and no wonder—and can't ride," said Ralph to Phil, "and my father won't leave the police to me, and it's too late now to do anything worth doing before that confounded rehearsal. And Lawrence is no good—his stage fever gets hot as mine gets cool. I'll cut the rehearsal to-day. I'm the only one of the company who knows his part or hers, so I'll give the rest a chance of making up leeway. So if you're still game for the Holms, I'm your man. I want to gallop off my temper—Miss Doyle to be robbed, and here! I was never in such a rage since I was born. And by my own man!—I feel like a thief myself. I shall have to live like a miser till I can buy her a Koh-i-noor, unless they're found. Are you game for a gallop across country—bulfinches and all?"

"I don't know," said Phil. "There were no fences where I learnt to ride. But I certainly mean the Holms, whatever's in the way."

"I'm more vexed about this business than I can say," said Ralph, as they rode down the avenue towards the road. Phil was anything but a graceful horseman, but he had done his share of rough riding on the steppes, and had the hand, if not the knees, that a horse understands and obeys. Or perhaps it was the mind and not so much the hands—horses are human enough to make it mean much the same thing. "Miss Doyle is the only stranger among us all, and that she should have been singled out is an abominable shame. And my own man—there's only one comfort; he wasn't an Englishman."

"What was he? A Frenchman?" asked Phil; curious, although he had convinced himself she was not Phoebe, about anything and everything that concerned Miss Doyle.

"A Pole."

"Which means—scoundrel," said Phil, thinking of Stanislas Adrianski, as the type of a Pole. "I have been in Russia, and I know." He was a mathematician; therefore a reasoner. But a mathematician, when in love, has not been found to differ much from men who have never so much as heard of the hyperbola. Stanislas Adrianski had carried off Phoebe Burden. Stanislas Adrianski is a Pole. Therefore a Pole is a scoundrel.

"I wish I was called," said Ralph. "To the bar, I mean," he added, condescending to explanation for the benefit of a lay and unenlightened engineer. "I'd prosecute my servant as hotly as if I were defending him—I'd get him penal servitude for life, and be made attorney-general on the spot for my eloquence and all that sort of thing. It's a confounded nuisance altogether. If the scoundrel's caught he'll have to be tried; and Miss Doyle will have to swear to her jewels, and how she had them safe."

And so he ran and rambled on about Miss Doyle and her diamonds till Philip Nelson became vaguely jealous on account of a girl who, not being Pheebe, was of no earthly account to him. They were riding towards an open gate, but he put his horse at the hedge and cleared it handsomely, while Ralph took the easier way.

Ralph nodded approval. "Qui m'aime," he shouted with a laugh, and led off at a gallop, Phil following with good will.

Without anything more in the shape of talk, the two young men, seemingly so opposite in all qualities and conditions, had become friends before they reached the threshold of the dreary prospect that signifies Cautleigh Holms. Ralph's gallop was whim; Phil's something more than whim—the need of working off a ferment which troubled his heart and which he honestly believed was troubling his brain. But the conditions were the same; the swift, straight rush against the slight, sharp wind, the subtle sympathy between horse and man, the conquest of accidental or intentional difficulties, the rivalry of ridership, the sharp taste of the air already salt with the sea. The supposed right to pride was on the side of Ralph. But the real pride of self was on the side of Phil. So that Ralph, in heart, lowered himself, Phil exalted himself, and both met half way. Ralph was, and had to remain, the gentleman, in the sight of all who hold, and rightly hold, that by "Nature's gentleman" we may mean more than simply gentleman, but never exactly the same. Yet across the gulf of circumstances, men may join hands. And a frank gallop together through the same air is the best hand-shake in the world.

The Holms proved to be, as Philip had been given to understand, a wide and desolate tract of marsh-land, dotted here and there with island hillocks of rank vegetation, which promised fertility should the whole be reclaimed from the state of half-flood which was its normal condition.

Probably these marshes had at some period or other been under the waves of the now faraway sea. Parts already formed natural water-meadows, affording occasional pasture, but in general the waste was as complete as the steppes which had been Phil's last field of work, and far less habitable.

"There's your work before you," said Ralph, reining up on a roughly run-up causeway whence was to be had the most characteristically dreary view of these marshes which a thin winter mist now rendered doubly drear. "It doesn't look much like a gold mine. But it's the best snipe-shooting in England, Nelson. I shouldn't myself have the heart to turn the Holms into a lot of common cornfields. But then I should never have the heart to be an engineer at all. I believe you wouldn't stick at pulling down the Alps, if you knew how."

"When Nature makes blunders, they have to be put straight," said Phil, settling the question once for all.

"Nature never blunders," said Ralph. "If only one thing is ever right, and everything else is always wrong, then she blundered woefully either in making you or in making me, for we're as unlike as if we'd been turned out by different hands. I should hate a world turned out by an engineer. Not that you can make even a couple of railway lines as you would like to."

"Then you think that Nature never makes two things the same?"

"Never. Not even two leaves."

"Not the two Lesurques—not the two Martin Guerres?"

"No, nor the two Dromios; and not even Shakespeare could do it."

"Then you would not believe me if I told you that here, in your own house, is a lady so like a girl with whom I was brought up as if we were brother and sister that, when I met her last night, I could not get it out of my head that they were the same?"

"Not believe that you thought so? Of course I should believe. But that you couldn't find plenty of difference if you saw them side by side—no. Which girl do you mean?"

"Miss Doyle."

"Perhaps they are relations?"

"No. The girl I mean was a foundling, brought up by my father and mother—and my father is, or was, a struggling copying-clerk who has never been out of London since I was born. And yet she is as like Miss Doyle, who has always lived in India,

and has diamonds to lose, as if the two were one."

"A foundling? I wonder if old Doyle had twins before he turned nabob. Now let me see what's the best way of getting you into one of our show-bogs; you'll want to see the worst at once, I suppose. There's a fine one, I know, out there—but I'm afraid getting there's not so easy at this time of year; or for that matter at any time. Let me see—if you don't mind waiting here a few minutes, I'll ride out and scout. I know the ground and there's less chance of my meeting with the fate of Edgar of Ravenswood than you. If I'm not back before midnight, you may give me up till you find me in the shape of an obstruction to one of your draining pipes. If it's all right, I'll wave my hat, and you can follow."

Philip watched his new friend dismount, lead his horse from the causeway, and, having remounted on a starting place of fairly firm ground, proceed at a walk as straight towards a distant osier-copse as the horse's instinctive wisdom would allow. The way seemed passable, but uncertain; at any rate Ralph neither signalled nor turned. The delay, however, seemed by no means long. The possibilities of preternatural likenesses were once more disturbing Phil's mind. If Ralph was right, and if such things were indeed beyond the working laws of Nature, then Phoebe was not like, but was, Miss Doyle—that is to say, of two impossibilities the more incredible was the less impossible. "I must speak to her," thought he, "come of it what will." Then he tried to consider what he had already seen of the Holms, and to attend to business in spite of Miss Doyle. He must not think, in working hours, of anything but work. So he worked out, in his mind, a quadratic equation by way of pulling his mind together, and then—Ralph Bassett suddenly disappeared. A thick wreath of mist had come between the causeway and the osier-copse, and made the prospect a faithful picture of Phil's own mind, wherein all that he did not care to see was clear and plain, all that he did care to see, blotted and blurred.

There did not appear to be any particular danger, because Ralph would have nothing to do but wait where he was till the mist should pass away. But it was certainly awkward, because, for aught Phil could tell, a mist on the Holms might be a matter of hours—it might last till sunset, even. On the other hand, it might be a matter of

minutes only; in any case Phil had to stay where he was, like a sentry on duty, if only that Ralph might not miss a landmark as soon as the fog cleared.

Minutes passed, and the fog did not clear.

On the contrary, it grew thicker and deeper, though, with the seeming caprice of mists, whether mind-born or marsh-born, it held well away from Phil's own post on the causeway, and stood over the marsh about three hundred yards away, less like a veil than a wall. It was more like a sea-fog than anything Phil ever had seen on shore, and told him a good deal about what the nature of his report on the Holms would have to be. How long was this going to last, even if it was not going to end in cause for serious anxiety? At the end of about half an hour he shouted, but no answer came.

Still, to wait patiently was all he could do. And at last patience seemed on the point of being rewarded. The mist thinned and lifted a little, and broke on the left and shifted on the right. But it soon settled down again, with this result—that the copse and the rider were as closely veiled as ever, while the causeway itself was covered in the direction of the way home. Not only was Ralph out of sight, but Phil's own retreat was cut off for the time. Yet, all the while, his own part of the causeway, and its continuation through the marshes, were left clear. As he looked out towards the invisible osiers, there was dense fog in front, dense fog to the right along the road, and a gathering film behind. But overhead and to the left the air was nothing more than a little damp and dull.

It is a good thing, however, to be on horseback now and then, if only for the sake of having somebody to think of besides oneself, and besides what one loves better than oneself; which last is double selfishness if it keeps out the rest of the world. One cannot forget a horse to the same extent as one can forget one's fellow-creatures. Phil was beginning to feel himself growing damp and cold, so he kept moving in order to prevent Sir Charles Bassett's horse from getting colder. He became conscious at last of a curious but not wholly unwelcome sensation of being in his life, as well as for the moment, cut off from the whole world, and alone. Absolute loneliness had not upon him its lately developed effect upon Doyle, because he had never known the contrary—he certainly did not miss Ronaine. Phoebe was lost—must be lost. He might, if he ever saw her again, put formal questions to

Miss Doyle, but he knew beforehand what the answer would be; that a rich girl, just home from India, had never heard the name of Nelson or been aware of a double. And since Phoebe was lost, what then? There lay the Holms: the land and the work nearest his hand. Every vain bewilderment about Phoebe was henceforth treason to the Holms. "There lie my best," thought he, looking out straight at the dead, blank, wet grey wall. "And if it can't be my all, I'll make it all I can."

All at once while, in the course of mounted-sentry to and fro, he rode towards the mist upon the causeway, he heard footsteps approaching. Hope suggested the escape and return out from the fog of Ralph Bassett, helped either by lucky accident or judicious skill. But had it been Ralph, whether mounted or on foot, he would have heard the steps of Ralph's horse, and he heard none. Next best to Ralph, however, would be a native who knew the Holms and who might be of service as a guide. Instead of calling out, therefore, he rode straight on, and met the owner of the approaching footsteps just where the air began to clear.

It was the form of a phantom giant which seemed, at first, to separate itself from the broken edge of the mist and to glide towards him. But this optical illusion soon resolved itself into a wet, muddy figure, limp and weary looking, with a hurried and anxious gait as if it had been utterly lost in the fog and had been wandering about in some devil's circle for hours. Then it became clearer still. And then the brain of Philip Nelson seemed consciously to reel, as he saw, straight in front of him, and yet still as if some phantom of the marsh mist, a face that had haunted his fevered dreams on the steppes of Russia—a thin sallow face, with dark, deep eyes, set in a frame of long black hair. But his brain did not reel for long.

"If there are two Phoebe Burdens, there are not two Stanislas Adrianskis—thank Heaven for so much!" he exclaimed in spirit, as he felt the mist half clearing, and rode forward in the spirit of a dog upon a wolf.

A "NOTICE B" MEETING.

THE School Board for London is frequently spoken of as the Educational Parliament, and such a description of it is very good, as far as it goes. But it goes rather less than half-way. The board is a

legislative body, but it is still more an administrative one. The administrative duties which fall to the lot of a member of the board are many and varied, but perhaps the most onerous and certainly the most sorrowful of them is that of hearing and adjudicating upon "the statements of parents under Notice B." The School Board notices so lettered are served upon parents, who, in despite of previous "warnings," have continued to habitually neglect to cause their children to attend school regularly and punctually. Such parents already stand within the law, but this notice is intended to give them "another chance," if they choose to avail themselves of it. By the terms of the notice they are "invited" to attend at a given time and place "to state any excuse they may have, and to show cause why they should not be summoned before a magistrate and fined." The total number of these notices served is, in round numbers, seventy-five thousand a year, and fifteen hundred meetings a year are held, for hearing cases under them. The general rule of the board is to hold one such meeting per week in each of the various sub-districts of the eleven divisions into which, for School Board purposes, London is mapped out; and arrangements are made for hearing at them, not only those who are called upon to show cause against being summoned, but also those who wish to apply for remission of school fees, or the granting of half-time certificates. These Notice B Meetings, as they are technically called, incidentally throw a considerable degree of light upon how the other half of the world—the half dwelling upon poverty's side of the social gulf—live, or to use a phrase familiar to themselves, do not live, but linger.

In their essential features all Notice B Meetings are alike, and we will take as our illustration one recently held in a fair average School Board district. It is as a whole a working-class district; one in which there are a good many well-to-do artisans, as well as a great number of unskilled labourers, regular and "cas'alty." These, with their families, make up the bulk of the inhabitants, but within the district are also to be found a small but strictly exclusive Irish colony, a similar colony of street folk—costers, chair-caners, tinkers, and the like—and a warm little corner which the "no visible means of support" and "well known to the police" classes, have marked as their own.

The meetings for this district are held at offices attached to one of the board schools. An inner office serves as committee-room, an outer one as waiting-room. In the former are assembled the member who is to hear the cases, the clerk to the divisional committee, and the three visitors concerned in the cases to come on. Before the members are the "hearing" books of the visitors, wherein the official particulars of the cases are duly entered up; a pile of forms of birth, and medical certificates, and a packet of the Charity Organisation Society's tickets. The clerk has in hand the "record of proceedings" sheets, while the visitors are armed with their note-books.

Five minutes before the time of attendance named in the notices, everybody and everything in the committee-room is ready for work, and of course an air of official decorum reigns over all. But in the waiting-room the scene is much more animated, and, after a fashion, picturesque. There are ninety cases on the books. In the event sixty-five of the invited put in an appearance, and already about twenty of them are assembled, and others are dropping in. They are about as motley a gathering as could well be got together.

They include representatives of almost every type of men and women "who live or die by labour." Where there is a male parent concerned in the case, he is the person legally responsible, but in the great majority of cases the mothers appear to the notices, while in some instances children are sent. Four men and two girls of about twelve years of age are now here to make answer; in all the other cases women have come. Several have infants in their arms, and others have brought with them, to be "talked to," the children for whose misdeeds in the way of truanting they are called to account. Two or three of the women are well-dressed, and in being so stand out distinctly from the others, from whose companionship they are rather inclined to shrink. Those others belong to the poorest classes, and even a stranger would be able to see at a glance that the thriftless and reckless types of poverty are as fully and variously represented as are the struggling and self-respecting types. In the picture as a whole the dirt tints predominate, and occasionally extend to faces as well as draperies, while the reek of humanity which begins to arise as the room fills up is appreciably tempered by spirituous odours. With few exceptions the women

are of the working classes in a double sense: are not only the wives or widows of working men, but themselves hired workers for daily bread. A majority, as their hands and arms testify, are charwomen or washerwomen. In one corner, buttonholing collars, as she waits, is a sempstress. She figures on the official record as a "deserted woman." Her husband deserted her three years ago, leaving her with two children to support. She was not strong enough to engage in any heavy labour, and not sufficiently skilled to take to the better paid classes of needlework. She had therefore perforce to resort to plain needlework for a living—to slop shirt-making, and cuff and collar buttonholing. By working for sixteen hours a day she can earn seven shillings a week. That with a weekly allowance from the parish of two shillings and two loaves, is at the best of times all that she has wherewith to provide food, clothing, and shelter for herself and family. But work is often slack, and in very dull times she has only her parish pay. Thus her average income is very small, and her average life proportionally hard. Employers in the buttonholing trade are strict taskmasters. Their hands must daily deliver a full tale of work, otherwise there will be stoppages from their scant pay, or, it may be, dismissal. Therefore it is that this sempstress is busily plying her needle here, and it needs no expert to see that she is sewing at once with a double thread a shroud as well as a shirt.

Sitting by the fire in a crouching attitude is another woman, who more literally than even the poor buttonholer is "killing herself to live." She works in a white-lead factory, and suffers from chronic lead-poisoning, which she is quite well aware will "finish her." She has worked at the business "off and on" for years, and for a labouring woman earns fairly good pay, but the action of the poison is sure, and with her has reached a stage when it will no longer be so slow as it has been.

Near her are two stalwart Irishwomen chattering together with wonderful rapidity of utterance and richness of brogue. They are market-garden women, daughters of the soil, and with, as the old joke has it, a good deal of their mother about their clothing, and more especially upon the heavy "lace-ups" which serve them as foot gear.

Next to these two is seated Mrs. "Joe" D——, wife and working partner of a fish-hawker. Probably she has none other

than "working" clothes ; at any rate it is in her working garments that she has come, and they give off an ancient and fish-like smell of a very pronounced character. It is perhaps from a consciousness of this latter fact, and with a view to qualifying the smell, that Mrs. Joe has been indulging in spirituous refreshment. She breathes forth an unmistakable, if neither rich nor rare, aroma of whisky. If really intended to have a deodorising effect in relation to the fish smell, the spirit is a failure ; its only practical effect has been to make Mrs. Joe look and talk like a very foolish fishwife indeed.

Of the men who are among the earlier arrivals in the waiting-room, one, it is painfully evident, is in an advanced stage of consumption. He is a son of toil, but no longer a horny-handed one. His hands are white and thin almost to transparency, and so, too, is his face, except when it is flushed from the effects of the "church-yard" cough with which every now and again he is seized.

Beside him, standing up with his back against the wall and his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, is Mr. "Curly" F——, a well-known corner-man in the district. His countenance is far from prepossessing, but he is tall and large of limb, and would be muscular but that drinking habits and a life of idleness have made him flabby. Even as he is, however, he looks the sort of man that a ganger of labourers would readily give work to. But "Curly" does not believe in work—for himself, that is. He chooses to give himself brevet rank as a labourer, but as a matter of fact he is wholly and solely a loafer. His wife, a very hard-working washerwoman, maintains such home as he and she and their children have. "Curly" spends his time in cornering about, and only exerts himself to the end of obtaining drink "on the cheap." In a relative way, he is passing honest. He has frequently been suspected of having had a hand in "sneaking" goods from shop doors, but the only offences for which he has been actually convicted and "done time" are those of drunkenness and violence—generally combined. He has ill-treated persons who have objected to treat him, or who have protested against his treating himself at their expense by seizing and drinking the liquors they had ordered for their own consumption. For the heinous offence of not drinking fair he has severely assaulted fellow corner-men. On several occasions he has smashed the windows of public-

houses, the landlords of which have refused to serve him, and more than once he has gone a considerable way towards fulfilling his threat to "corpse" a policeman. For these offences he has served sentences of from seven days to three months' imprisonment. And he is lucky at that, say his friends, as he would certainly have had to do more than one "six-monther," could his wife have been persuaded to have appeared against him for his brutalities to her.

Over his other deeds of violence "Curly" is wont to be boastful, but over his wife-beating performances he has the grace to be apologetic.

"It is only," he explains, "when he has 'got the distiller proper'"—which is his euphemism for being mad drunk with spirits—"that he 'slogs' the old girl ; but then," he admits, "he does 'slog her to rights.'"

Though he will not work himself, he is strict in seeing that his wife works. To have attended this meeting she would have had to lose half-a-day's employment, and it is to obviate this sacrifice that "Curly" himself has condescended to put in an appearance.

The individuals mentioned above are fair examples of the assembly, and there is no time now to describe others. The business of the meeting is "just about to commence."

First come, first served, is the order of the day, and the earliest arrival is a tidily-dressed comfortable-looking woman, who drags in a boy of about ten years of age—a healthy, thoughtless, mischievous-looking customer, whose portrait would require very little idealising to serve as an illustration to the text, "Unwillingly to school."

"How is it, Mrs. Blank, that your boy attends school so irregularly ?" asks the member, as soon as that lady is seated opposite to him.

"It isn't our fault," she answers. "We do all we can to get him to go regular ; but it is all no use ; he will play truant."

"Do you hear what your mother says, boy ?" asks the member, assuming his severest tone.

Johnny makes no verbal reply, but proceeds to "knuckle" his eyes, with a view to, if possible, squeeze out a tear.

"Is what your mother says true ?" is the next question, put in the same tone.

And this time Johnny, still continuing to knuckle, faintly answers :

"Yes."

"Then don't you think you are acting very ungratefully to your parents? I can see you are well cared for, and yet you cause your mother to be brought here and are likely to bring disgrace upon your father by getting him summoned to a police-court."

Johnny making no answer, the member proceeds :

"How would you like to be sent away from home for five years, to be sent to a school where you would be kept in night as well as day, and birched whenever you misbehaved yourself?"

At this point the attempt to get out a tear having proved a failure, Master Johnny sets up a dismal yell.

"It is all very well to howl now that you have brought yourself into trouble," the member goes on; "you should have thought of this before."

Then, turning to the clerk, he adds in a stage-whisper :

"I think we had better make the order to send him away at once."

Hearing this, Johnny redoubles his howling, and energetically draws the sleeve of his jacket across his face, where the tears might have been, but are not. Professing to be softened by these evidences of remorse and terror, the member, after a pause, asks :

"Well, if we let you off this time, will you promise to give up truant-playing?"

"Yes, sir," answers Johnny fervently.

"Very well then, I'll take your word, but remember, if you break it, you will be sent away immediately — you can go now."

Johnny needs no second permission, and is out of doors before his mother is on her feet.

"Mind, Mrs. Blank," the member adds, as she is about to follow her son, "though I have said this to your boy, it is still the father who is responsible. You had better see Johnny into school yourself for a time," and Mrs. Blank promises that she will do so.

On the second case being called, a girl of about twelve years of age comes in. She brings a note from her mother, which runs in a sort of phonetic spelling, and without capitals or stops :

"gentlemen please excuse me not coming to your meeting i enjoy very bad health with tonsils in the throat and boots not fit to go out in if you will look over it she shall go regular."

"Very well, my girl," says the member

when he has mastered the contents of this document, "tell your mother we will look over it this time, but if she does not send you regularly in future, your father will be summoned."

The third person called is the sempstress. Hers is an "application" case. She wishes to apply for a half-time certificate for her elder child, a daughter who has just turned ten years of age—the earliest age at which it is by law permitted to School Boards to grant such certificates. In cases of this class the applicant is called upon to show that the child will be "necessarily and beneficially employed." In the present instance the circumstances of the parent are known, and the necessity is taken for granted. With respect to the beneficial character of the employment proposed, the mother states that she can get the girl a "morning" place as domestic help to the wife of a small shopkeeper, who will pay her a shilling a week and give her all her food. She knows the woman, and is sure she will be kind to the girl, and give her good food and plenty of it. The last consideration, she adds, will certainly be beneficial to the child, seeing that she is a growing girl, and has very often to go short of food at home. The member fully agrees with this view, and the certificate is unhesitatingly granted.

The succeeding case is also an application one, but this time the application is for remission of school fees. There are three children concerned, and the fee at the school they attend is a penny a week per child. The mother appears, and addressing her the member remarks :

"Really, the sum is small; if we cancel the month you are now in arrears, couldn't you manage to pay regularly in future?"

"No, sir," the woman answers with a decisive shake of the head; "we paid as long as ever we could, till it became a question between the school pennies and a bit of bread."

"Your husband," the dialogue goes on, "has been out of work a good deal, I see."

"Yes, he has only worked one week in the last three months."

"How is that?"

"Well, he was out of work six weeks through slackness of trade, and the first week he got into work again he poisoned his hand, and has been off ever since."

"How have you been supporting yourselves then?"

"By our home and clothes. We have parted with everything that money could

be raised upon. You can see for yourself," and she places a bundle of pawn-tickets upon the table, and then covering her face with her hands, sobs aloud.

Her statement is true; a once comfortable little home has, so to speak, been boiled down into this packet of pawn-broker's duplicates, and the position of the family is, as the member at this point remarks, a sad, a very sad one.

"How are you managing now?" he goes on when the woman has recovered herself a little.

"Well, friends and neighbours have been very kind to us. A few of my husband's old shopmates made up a pound for him, and at times, when we haven't had even a bit of bread to break our fast with, those but little better off than ourselves have shared their loaf with us."

"And about your rent?"

"Well, the landlord he's been very good to us too. We've lived under him eight years, so that he knows us, and he's told us we need not be afraid of him; in fact, one or two Mondays when he's been collecting at the other houses, he has left us a trifle."

The member is now fully satisfied that the case is a deserving one, and accordingly announces his decision.

"I will recommend the board to remit your children's fees for six months," he says; "though of course I hope," he adds, "that your husband will be at work again long before that time."

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness," the woman answers; "but at the same time, sir, I don't see how I am to send the children to school yet awhile. They have no boots, and scarcely any other clothing, they are not fit to be seen out of doors, and besides would catch their deaths of cold. I've borrowed clothes to come here in to-day, but you can't manage in that way for children to go to school, week after week."

"All that I can do in that matter," observes the member, "is to give you a ticket to the Charity Organisation Society. If your case will bear investigation—as it seems to me it will—they will probably give you some assistance; I am sure I hope they will."

The ticket is signed and handed to her, and gathering up her pawn-tickets, she passes out.

When she is beyond earshot, the member, turning to the visitor having charge of the case, instructs him to keep him posted in

the case, and this bodes well for the poor family, seeing that this member is one who liberally does alms in secret in connection with his present function.

The next case is an application for a half-time certificate for a boy of twelve years of age. The mother who comes to support the application has evidently been "priming" herself for the occasion. It is palpable alike to eye and nostril that she is under the influence of "the gin fiend." She has been before the committee before, and now enters the room with a confident air. There is—after a fashion—pride in her port, defiance in her eye. She seats herself unbidden, and without waiting to be questioned exclaims :

"I want half-time for my boy!"

The member glances at the record, and then briefly and decisively answers :

"I can't grant it."

"Oh yes you can," is the instant retort. "I wasn't born yesterday; this is the shop where you do grant 'em. I know plenty as has had 'em from here, and for younger boys than mine too."

"That may be, but your boy has not passed the necessary standard."

"Whose fault is that?"

"Yours chiefly, I should suppose," promptly answers the member, "seeing that your son has always been irregular in his attendance at school. But that is not the point just now; I have no power to allow your boy half-time, and that ends the present matter. In fact, the visitor ought to have told you that it would only be a waste of time for you to come here."

"I did tell her so," the visitor puts in.

"Oh yes, he told me fast enough not to come," she admits; "and I told him as fast that I would come, and that if he thought I was the sort to be stalled off by an understrapper, he had got the wrong pig by the ear. Who is he to order me about, I should like to know? I soon settled him; I told him straight that I would talk to his masters, and give 'em a piece of my mind, as I'm a-doing of."

"We have heard quite enough of your mind," the member breaks in at this point of her harangue, "and to be plain with you, madam, we have seen quite enough of your condition. You have heard my decision, and now you had better go."

"You don't mean to let me have the half-time, then?" she asks, rising in wrath, and bringing her fist down upon the table with a bang.

"Certainly not; now leave the room."

"Ah, it's all very well for you!" she exclaims, "your bread is buttered, but perhaps it won't always be."

At this juncture the visitor in charge of the door through which the disposed of cases pass out, "catches the eye" of the member, and cuts short the further flow of invective with an emphatic cry of:

"This way out, please; this way out, Mrs. G——."

"Your bread——" she is beginning again, when the visitor steps between her and the table, and by advancing himself edges her towards the door, which closes upon her undignified exit.

It is now the turn of the consumptive labourer to appear. He is called upon to answer for the total absence from school for several weeks of his son, a boy of ten years of age. His plea is that the boy is beyond control, and the visitor in charge of the case reports that in his opinion the plea is substantially true.

"If what I read here is correct, Mr. S——," says the member, looking up from the record, "I am afraid we shall have to send your son away."

"Well, I'm sorry and ashamed to say it, sir," is the answer, "but for his own sake I think that is the best thing that could happen to him. If you don't send him away to a school, it is pretty certain he will get himself sent away to a prison. He is going to the bad in other things beside playing truant. He has stole money from his poor mother, and made away with things she had took in to wash. It is often eleven o'clock at night before he comes indoors, and he has stopped out all night. I used to lug him to school myself as long as I was able, but I'm not strong enough for him now, and he knows it."

"Our information," the member observes in reply, "bears out what you say. Your son would appear to be a fit subject for an industrial school. I will refer his case to the proper quarter, and a school will probably be found for him in the course of a week or two. Meanwhile do your utmost to keep him from getting into trouble."

So sentence of banishment goes forth against the young scapegrace, and the father departs lighter of heart than he came, for the boy has been a great trouble and sorrow to him.

In the case which follows the mother comes prepared to "show cause" in very practical fashion. The last addition to her family has been a twofold one, and she has brought the twins with her, one in her own

arms, the other carried by a nine-years-old daughter, in respect to whose irregularities of school attendance she is called to account.

She is asked the formal question: "Why is your child away from school so much?"

And replies, holding up the one baby and smilingly nodding towards the other as she speaks:

"Well, I should think, sir, you could pretty well see for yourself. These twins are four months old; I have another child under two years of age, and Maggie here is the oldest of six. Except for what help she can give me there is only my own pair of hands to do everything for eight of us."

"Your husband is a carpenter, I see," remarks the member, who has been looking at his papers; "what wages does he earn?"

"Six shillings a day, sir."

"Can't you engage some little assistance?"

"No, sir, I can't; of course I know there are those with less money have as large families, but, I assure you, against we have paid the rent, and my husband's clubs and the like, we have not a penny too much left to find food and clothing. I can't pay for help, and, of course, I can't leave the babies uncared for; I must have some help from Maggie."

"Yes, some help," says the member meditatively, "some help, but you are keeping her away from school fully half-time, and I can't allow that to go on. If your girl were over ten years of age I would be disposed to allow her half-time till your babies are a little older, but at present I have not the power to do so. You must manage with one day's absence per week."

"Oh, you must make it a day and a half," urges the mother; "I must have her all washing-day, and half a day for Friday's cleaning."

"Very well, then," assents the member; "under the circumstances I'll allow three half days per week," and so the case is settled.

It is now the turn of Curly F——, and he slouches into the room and seats himself with the air of one familiar with the scene, as, in fact, he is. He has been under notice quite a score of times, and summoned half-a-dozen. He and some of his children are among the hard bargains of the board. His two boys, aged respectively eleven and nine years, are—perhaps from hereditary transmission—of "Arab"

proclivities, and when not absent from school through parental neglect, do a good deal of truant-playing upon their own account. They have already been "carpeted," not only by the board members, but before the police-court magistrate also, though with but little effect. They are in all probability destined to be sent to an industrial school, if in the meantime they happily escape being consigned to some worse place. Their sister, a girl of twelve, is kept from school to drudge at home, and it is with respect to her that the father makes his present appearance.

"Here you are again then, Mr. F——," is the member's greeting, as Curly, having placed his cap under his chair, and squared his elbows on the table, scowls at him, though without looking him straight in the face.

"That ain't my fault," he growls; "it's you wot wanted me here, not me as wanted to come—wot's it all about this time?"

"About your daughter Mary having attended school only seven half days in the last six weeks."

"Polly's a good little girl."

"Just so," the member agrees. "I am informed that she is a very good little girl, and that is in itself a reason why you should not deprive her of education."

"She's got as much eddication now as ever she'll have any use for," growls the father, "but that ain't where the pinch comes in. If we're to be forced to send her to school, who's to mind the baby while her mother goes out to work?"

"If her mother was a widow, or her father an invalid, I would go into that question," answers the member. "To you I have only to say you must make such arrangements as will allow of Mary going to school regularly. If you do not, you will be summoned again."

"All right," Curly retorts; "if I am summoned I must stand the racket of it, as I have done before, that's all. You've got the game all your own way here, don't yer know, but I'll have a bit of an innings later on; wait till the 'lections come round, and see if me and my mates ain't on the job at your meetings."

This is the corner-man's parting shot. Without waiting for any formal dismissal he rises, and, throwing his cap on to his head and thrusting his hands into his pockets, again lurches out of the room.

After all, however, Curly is wise in his generation—wise with the wisdom of experience. He knows that by appearing to Notice B, he has at any rate gained time.

At these meetings it rarely occurs that a summons is ordered immediately. The meetings are avowedly instituted as a means of giving parents a last opportunity of avoiding being summoned. Even in such cases as that of Curly's the order is usually "regular or summons," and it is only after there has been further habitual irregularity of attendance upon the part of the child concerned that a summons is issued against the parent.

During the hearing of the above cases other parents have been arriving, and the cry is still they come. The member is in for a four hours' sitting, but, of course, we cannot go through all the cases with him. Those we have seen are, however, fairly typical of those to come, and will sufficiently illustrate the character and importance of this phase of the work which devolves upon members of the School Board for London.

A LITTLE LINK.

SHE sleeps—the welcome wintry sun
Is shining on her little face,
The firelight glints upon her hair,
My precious blossom! oh, how fair,

How very fair she is!
And soft she sleeps, my little one,
As sadly to and fro I pace,
And dream anew of olden bliss.
The flowers I plucked for her delight
Have fallen from the tiny hand;
The painted toy that charmed her eyes
With quaint design and action, lies

Beside the pictured book;
Strange thoughts arise, oh! blossom bright,
That vex and thrill me as I stand
Anear, and on thy features look.

Thy mother's face, thy mother's smile,
Thy mother's ringlets flowing free,
Her tinted cheek, her forehead white,
Her eyes, brown wells of liquid light;
Yea, all her charms are thine;
Thy mother kissed thy lips erewhile,
Before she sent thee forth to me,
And to that kiss I added mine.

And when this evening's shadows fall,
And thou art by her side again,
Will she, too, seek, as I have sought
The kiss the childish lips have brought
Our parted lips to bless?

Will she too fondly question all
I said and did, and seek to gain
A glimpse of our lost happiness?

Ah dear my wife! ah sweet my wife!
Too lightly won, too lightly lost;
Might riper age repair with tears
The havoc made in earlier years.

Should we weep, thou and I?
Should we clasp hands, and end the strife
That all our youthful years hath crossed,
And fare together till we die?

If we two stood upon the brink
Of that wide gulf that yawns between
Thy life and mine this many a day,
And one should to the other say,

"I erred the first—and most,"
Should we stretch out glad hands and link
Our lives, and let the dark "has been"
Float from us like a grim grey ghost?

'Tis hard to say, for pride is strong,
And either blamed the other's heat ;
But as I look upon the face
Of my one child, and in it trace
The looks of one away,
My heart cries out against the wrong
That bars us both from union sweet.
" And whose the blame ? " I sadly say.
I was to blame, for I was hard ;
She was to blame, for she was proud ;
And so the pride and hardness built
A wall between us, high as guilt ;
And yet no guilt was there.
But when my heart grew soft, she barred
The gate on love. I cried aloud ;
But she was deaf unto my prayer.
And so we drifted far apart,
While friends came in to heal the breach.
Poor fools ! to think that they could touch
With balm the hearts that ached too much,
Too wildly, for despair.
But pride put gauds above the smart,
And we were gay and light of speech,
And jeered at love and mocked at care.
But still the child, the little child,
Goes at the stated seasons forth
From her to me, from me to her,
And keeps keen thrilling thoughts astir,
Awaking old regret.
Thought springs to-night unfettered, wild,
Oh, wife ! what is life's living worth
If thou and I are parted yet ?
Lo ! I will break the bonds that hold
My life and thine in separate ways,
And standing by thee face to face
Beseach thee fill thine empty place,
And bless my lonely soul
With love like that fair love of old,
That gladdened all our morning days,
But stronger grown, and calm, and whole.
I will not grudge to own me wrong—
Great Heaven ! what slender form is here ?
What loving eyes look into mine ?
What hands in mine own hands entwine ?
My wife, my wife, at last !
Wake up, white blossom, sleep not long,
Awake to bless thy mother dear ;
Our days of dark are gone and past.
My bird, thou hast flown home to me,
Thrice welcome to thine early nest !
Nay, not a word between us twain
Of all the empty years of pain
For evermore be said.
It is enough for me and thee
That thou art here upon my breast,
That all our foolish past is dead.

"OPEN SESAME."

CHAPTER X. THE CONTRACT.

MARIE had known all the time that it would be so—that M. Delisle would set everything right. But why did he speak to her in such cold measured terms as he told her of her father's death, of his own desire to fulfil the last wishes of his friend, and provide for her welfare ?

Marie's grief for her father, though sincere, could hardly be very poignant. It was the loss of a memory only, of a sentiment, accompanied by indefinite yearnings, vague regrets. But her daily life went on

in the same way, and she was able to think a good deal about M. Delisle. And how strange it was, though now in perfect safety, he seemed to be in a greater hurry to get out of Canville than on his last visit, when in momentary danger of arrest. And yet he had been very kind to her. She was to look upon him as her guardian, and was to write to him whenever she wanted anything. She was dissatisfied with all this, and yet, what more could he have done ? Anyhow, his visit had made all things pleasanter. Everybody made much of Marie now, as if to make up for former neglect. Charles was coming home in a few days on purpose to pay his court to her, and yet the prospect did not give her any pleasure. And even her uncle, who had before ardently wished for the match, and worked for it, had ceased to speak of Charles. But then Brunet had changed a good deal since his imprisonment—had become morose and captious. He had gone back to the bank because he had no other resource ; but he no longer took any pleasure in his work.

As for M. Lalonde, he was anxious now that the marriage between his son and Marie should be arranged at once. What with the portion promised by Delisle, and Madame Souchet's gifts, to say nothing of the impounded ten thousand francs, Mademoiselle Desmoulins would be quite a prize. With her money could be bought the practice of M. Rochet, the notary, who was getting old and threatening every day to retire, and then Charles would be drawn away from those evil companions who led him into extravagance. But Charles was now recalcitrant, putting off coming home on one pretext or another, till his father's patience was quite worn out. And M. Delisle had written to ask whether everything had been settled. The portion he had promised was awaiting the completion of the contract. For himself, he was going abroad for an indefinite period, and wanted everything arranged before he left. To Brunet, who had questioned him as to the disposal of the ten thousand francs, of which he declared he would not be again the custodian, Delisle recommended that the money should be transferred to Madame Desmoulins and her daughter. Certain formalities were required before M. Huron would be justified in handing over the specie, and it was thought that the worthy quartermaster encouraged these delays in the desperate hope that he might be able in the end to pur-

chase the silver money on his own account. For, as he said with a desolate air, if once the money got into circulation he would be undone, his coin would no longer be unique.

In spite of Charles's absence, preparations for the wedding went on. After all, there was no need for Charles to present himself till the eve of his marriage, when the contract was to be signed.

But while Madame Souchet's elaborate preparations were in progress, the bride-elect, who ought to have been in her glory among it all, suddenly broke down and took to her bed.

It was Uncle Lucien who came to see her most frequently and whose company she relished most in her illness. He was quiet and sympathetic, said little, but seemed to share in the melancholy that oppressed his niece.

"I think when you are married, Marie," he said one day, "I shall try for some post a good way off, where people won't know me or talk about me."

"Uncle," cried Marie in distress, "you will not leave me? Why, uncle, if it had not been for the thought of you, and the notion that perhaps I could make life easier for you—"

"My child!" cried Brunet, aghast, "what have I done? Is it not your heart's desire, my dear?"

Marie shook her head decisively.

"No, uncle; I have never cared much for Charles. Not since—let me see," a faint flush of colour coming into her pale cheeks—"not since the night of the fête."

Brunet started, and his hat came down to the floor with a crash.

"What, you felt that?" he cried. "Marvellous is the instinct of the pure feminine heart! Marie, you have thrown a flash of light into my mind."

Poor Marie was too much frightened to ask what it all meant. Her heart beat in violent palpitation, as her uncle snatched up his hat and hurried out of the room.

He did not lose a moment, but strode hastily to the bank. He was afraid to lose a moment, lest courage should fail him, or rather lest the powerful impulse of the moment should be lost.

The banker sat at his desk, signing his letters. Each one, as he finished it, he dusted with glittering pounce from a saucer by his side. He sent a keen glance at Brunet under his eyebrows, but went on with his occupation.

"M. Lalonde," said Brunet, standing

over him, fire glittering in his eyes, "I have found out the thief!"

"Eh?" cried the banker, making a smudge of one of his flourishes and looking up with uneasy glance. "What thief?"

"The thief who stole your money. It was your own son!"

M. Lalonde did not say a word at first, but went on signing with a shaking hand, not able to raise his eyes to encounter the flashing glance of his clerk.

"And you let me suffer for his guilt!"

Lalonde felt the pulse in his brain beating as if it would break its way through, but he contrived to say huskily:

"How do you know? How do I know?"

"M. Lalonde," said Brunet calmly, "on the evening of the fête your son confided to me that he had drawn upon you a bill for ten thousand francs. To save the boy—for I loved him, M. Lalonde, and longed that he should be the husband of my niece—I promised to take up the bill with the money you know of. Next morning he did not want the money. The affair of the bill was a joke. You know very well whether or not it was a joke."

Lalonde had not a word to say; he was stupefied; touched also, it seemed, with some remorse. He even rubbed a corner of his eye with the back of his hand.

"You see what fathers have to suffer," he said at last in a tremulous voice. "Grand Dieu! I believe you are right, Brunet. But what can be done? How can I get it back from him? The boy has not got a sou—not till he is married."

"He shall never marry my niece," cried Brunet firmly.

And from this nothing could move him.

The banker begged, implored, would have gone down on his knees to his clerk or grovelled on the floor if only he would have consented to let the marriage go on. But Brunet was inexorable. He packed up his alpaca coat, made a little parcel of all his belongings—he would not serve Lalonde another hour.

That night letters went out to all the expected guests announcing the postponement of the wedding.

Madame Souchet was nothing loth, for she had never really liked the match, and now she began once more to fondle the idea of marrying Marie to M. Cavalier. The uncle had already shown signs of repentance. After all, her preparations might not have been made in vain. The contract even would serve with the names of the parties to it changed.

It has been said that all the invited guests had been warned of the postponement of the wedding. But this is incorrect. By some oversight, M. Delisle had not been informed, and on the day appointed for the signing of the contract, he, as in duty bound, made his appearance. Brunet was the first to see him, and was shocked at the carelessness that had caused the omission. But, strange to say, Delisle himself seemed absolutely pleased at being brought down on this fruitless errand. But he listened with a clouded brow as Lucien explained that circumstances had occurred to throw a doubt on the character of M. Charles Lalonde.

"But la petite," cried Delisle impatiently; "how does she bear it?"

"Well, strange to say," said Lucien with a deprecating shrug; "she is wonderfully better since. She was prepared to obey the wishes of her friends, and especially yours, monsieur. Yes, from the moment the poor child knew that it was your wish, she submitted with the most charming resignation."

"But resignation!" cried Delisle; "I thought she had set her heart upon him."

"Well, and so did I," replied Brunet; "but she confessed to me the other day, that from the night of the fête she had ceased to care for him. And I half guess the cause," added Brunet mysteriously.

"Ah, you guess it!" cried Delisle, pressing Lucien's arm warmly; "well, if your surmise is correct, I shall be the happiest of men."

Madame Souchet herself was struck dumb with surprise when she saw Delisle walk into her salon, and recalled that he had not been informed of the postponement.

"Ah, my child," cried Delisle, making his way to where Marie had advanced to greet him; "I came here to give you away, and now I find I am to keep you. Is it to be so, petite?"

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Marie, not venturing to understand him; "I give you a great deal of trouble, but it is not my fault, monsieur. I would have obeyed your wishes."

"Ah yes," echoed Madame Souchet; "I hope I have brought her up sufficiently well for that. She is not likely to take up with notions about women's rights. And on my part I have not been wanting in my duty. Already I have secured another match for Marie, that poor young Cavalier who was almost heartbroken when his affair was broken off. And I hope I may reckon upon your approval, monsieur."

"Thunder of war, no, madame!" roared Delisle in a voice that made poor Marie quail.

"But, monsieur," cried Madame Souchet with wonderful command of temper; "the poor girl must marry."

"Madame Souchet," said Delisle angrily, "don't you see that you intimidate Marie? And she is to have her own way in everything, do you hear? But she can't speak her mind fully while you are listening."

"Well, I'll go to the other end of the room then," said Madame Souchet good-humouredly.

"Marie," cried Delisle, as soon as Madame Souchet was out of earshot, taking hold of both her hands and looking into her face, "I want you to follow exactly the promptings of your heart."

"Monsieur, I will do just what you wish," said Marie in a trembling voice; her heart was fluttering too much to permit her to speak steadily.

"Come then," said Delisle impatiently; "will you marry this Cavalier?"

"Yes, monsieur," whispered Marie faintly.

"You will!" cried Delisle in anger; "you will marry that fellow!"

"If you wish it, monsieur, but—".

"Well," asked Delisle, bending his head to the level of her lips; "you will, but—".

"But I think it would break my heart, monsieur."

"That is right," cried Delisle in triumph.

"Marie, I will give you to nobody—to nobody, do you hear? I will keep you myself. You will be my wife, will you not, and follow me to the end of the world?"

"Yes, monsieur, if you wish it," replied Marie meekly.

"If I wish it," cried Delisle. "Can you say nothing better than that to me?"

It is to be presumed, however, that Marie found something better to say after a while, for Delisle left Madame Souchet's radiant with joy. He found out Brunet, and dragged him away to Madame Desmoulins.

"You were right," he cried as they went along; "it was the night of the fête that Marie began to love me. But how could you guess it?"

"Mon Dieu!" cried Brunet in amazement, "but I never guessed it at all."

But when Madame Desmoulins heard what brought Delisle to her, she turned paler than ever, and shook her head dolefully.

"Ah, I had a presentiment," she murmured. "From the first I would have kept you apart, but it was willed to be."

Still she would not refuse her consent. But it was with many misgivings that she gave it.

Her brother could not understand her coldness and reluctance.

"He is too much like my husband, Lucien," she replied to his remonstrances, "too warm a heart, too generous a spirit. One day he will give away Marie's future just as my Ernest gave away mine."

M. Huron managed to secure Delisle and Brunet on their way back to the post-office. It was about the affair of the money, the ten thousand francs. He had now received the order to return the sum to Lucien Brunet. Lucien swore that he would have nothing more to do with it; his sister might take charge of it. Huron became thoughtful, and presently took Delisle aside. He had heard the news, of course. It had flown through Canville like the electric spark. He congratulated M. Delisle. But would it annoy him very much to have him, M. Huron, as—well as father-in-law. He had long admired Madame Desmoulins.

"Excellent," exclaimed Delisle. "Huron, you are a brave fellow, and if you can make that poor woman happy, you will earn my everlasting gratitude."

M. Huron modestly thought he could.

"But, monsieur, in that case the dowry of Madame Desmoulins will no doubt be the very ten thousand francs."

"Clearly," replied Delisle. "It is hers, to do what she likes with it."

"Ha! ha!" cried Huron in triumph. "Then I will arrange it, monsieur, that my coin shall be still unique."

As for Père Douze he could not get over his disappointment, nor the triumph of the gendarmerie. He retired from public life into the hospice of the town, and there he is still to be seen on a sunshiny day, patrolling the garden-paths, and looking vigilantly after the ripening pears and apples. He is much liked by the sisters, but of the other old people there he makes small account, and he is very severe with them if he catches them on the grass borders, or infringing any of the bye-laws of the institution. Only when he hears the rataplan he grows uneasy, and vows that he must go and teach that other fellow how to do it.

It was time for the père to retire when the Marshal set him the example, and a Republican maire was appointed to replace

Lalonde, a man who encouraged the town band to play the *Marseillaise* under his windows. The banker could not get over that either, and presently gave up business and retired to a farm he possessed in his own pays.

It was through Delisle's assistance that Brunet took over the house and office with its belongings, including the massive safe with its mysterious fittings.

And here he carries on a quiet little business as an agent de change, earning enough for his modest wants, and sometimes contriving to send fifty francs or so to poor Charles. For that unhappy youth has come to utter need.

And Madame Souchet is still at the post-office, although she is constantly threatening to resign if they go on adding to her duties in the present ridiculous way. She was a little vexed when young Cavalier married the handsomest girl in the whole district, with an excellent dowry. But she is somewhat consoled when she hears that he has already begun to make her unhappy.

And under the present administration Delisle has been reinstated in his rank in the navy, and has even got a command in distant seas.

But Marie had promised to follow him round the world, and does not seem to repent of her bargain.

A TRAVELLER'S TALES.

A STICK.

RECORDING the story of my "Gun-rack," I casually mentioned, in a list of articles which at that moment lay across it, "an almond-stick cut in the Arx at Candahar, and a thorn-stick from the Khoord Khyber." A comrade of the Afghan War pointed out to me last night that I was slightly forgetful of the facts in this description. Major L. reminds me that he cut the almond-stick referred to, with others, in the garden of the kiosk where General Stewart had his quarters, whilst I strolled round keeping watch—for damage to the trees was rigorously prohibited. As he identifies the object, I submit to correction, observing only that I did cut an almond-stick in the Arx, which apparently is lost, and that I never claimed, as it chances, to have secured this trophy with my own hands.

The pleasant controversy recalled every detail of a scene too long familiar to General Stewart's staff. For my own part, I left it after some weeks' stay, rode

back to India, crossed the Punjab, and joined Sir Sam Browne's force operating on the Khyber line.

During our first halt at Candahar, we lived in camp on the north-east side the town, in position to repel a foe descending from Ghuzni. After the occupation of Khelat-i-Ghilzai, danger from this point was no longer to be feared, and the army sought more comfortable quarters. In spring and early summer, before the stones crack and the earth shrivels with heat, the neighbourhood of Candahar may be pretty. But my recollection of it adds no pleasing picture to the mind's crowded gallery. All round stands the circuit of grey naked rocks; beneath, the grey naked walls of flat-roofed villages, among grey gnarled orchards. For the space of a mile about the city it is all one Golgotha, a field of bones, generation on generation. Thousands of monuments dot the plain, many of them large and costly, but all ruinous. Funeral processions meander through the waste at afternoon and early morning; all through the night, jackals and wild dogs and hyenas clamorously search the new-made graves. Each few yards one must jump a rapid stream, muddy with human clay, embanked with bones.

The general appearance of a cemetery is enhanced by groves of cypress which rise here and there, dark and funereal. But in effect these trees mark villa gardens, inhabited by merchants of the town or officers. Colonel St. John requisitioned one of them for the general and his staff. As we marched in from Khelat-i-Ghilzai, guides should have been waiting to show our new quarters, but they did not appear, and we lost ourselves. An amusing promenade that was for horsemen, who "larked" over the streams and walls, but the infantry of the escort swore in many languages a unanimous anathema.

After several excursions in a wrong direction, and much aimless steeple-chasing, we found our new abode. A solid wall enclosed it, perfectly rectangular, along the top side of which coursed a deep and broad irrigation channel, traversed by a substantial bridge. Entering the narrow gateway at one angle, upon the right, in a space between the outer and an inner circuit, were stables and servants' dwellings, strongly-built, pitch-dark, venomous with filth. By this arrangement, an enemy forcing the single entrance would have all the armed retainers of the household on his flank. Beyond the inner wall ran

another stream, carefully embanked, and lined with sturdy willows; beyond that a broad terrace—the dam, in fact, of this swift brook—and the garden sloped gently from its foundations. Our tents were pitched in a long line across the ground, parallel with the terrace.

The whole space within the walls may have been two to three acres. It was divided by a canal, some twenty feet wide, shallow, paved with flat blocks, banked with masonry. Hewn stepping-stones crossed it here and there. At intervals along the sides opened sluices for irrigation. The upper half of the garden was laid out in squares, ten feet across or so, for vegetables and flowers, each of them surrounded by its water-channel. A number of walks, broad and smooth, intersected the space, each lined with cypress; and the smaller fruit-trees—pomegranates, oranges, and the like—stood everywhere.

In the middle of the garden the canal poured into a large tank, walled with masonry, and provided with steps on every face. Broken structures therein had probably been fountains. From this point the ground was devoted to orchard trees. Beyond the tank the canal still descended, till its waters fell into a stream, almost a little river, at the bottom. Very handsome trees met across it. Beyond ran the garden wall.

Three kiosks, or pavilions, stood in this pleasure-ground, a large one at the top, one right and left midway down either side. Though built of mud, they were not inelegant. The principal of them, occupied by General Stewart, Colonel Hills (now Major-General), D.A.A.G., Major Chapman (now Colonel), D.A.Q.M.G., and the chief's aide-de-camp, Norman Stewart, had been decorated in the Persian manner at no small cost. Walls and ceilings of the reception-rooms were coated with stucco ornaments, brilliantly coloured, or were painted with roses as thick as they could lie. One chamber had remains of that curious panelling in fragments of mirror, symmetrically framed, which is seen, more or less, wherever Pathan architecture established itself in Hindostan. I do not know, however, that it is not borrowed from the Persian.

Furniture and carpets possibly had matched this splendour of the walls, but when we arrived, here as elsewhere, the Candahar populace had worked their will. For this dwelling belonged to Mir Afzul, the governor, who had given it as a resi-

dence to two ladies of his family. When he fled, therefore, it was looted.

In the day when those buildings were raised, and those waterworks constructed, some degree of public confidence evidently reigned at Candahar. I know not when that time was. In an epoch less happy, but more readily identified, the walls had crumbled without repair, all the glass had vanished, the fountains had clothed themselves in moss. But the garden had been cared for. At every corner stood such clumps of rose and jasmine as I never saw, The irrigated beds were green with spinach, the walks lined with iris and overhung with cypress, the orchard trees well-trained.

This is a long introduction, but readers may be not uninterested in the sketch of a Pathan villa. Memory recalls one much more magnificent, that of Rosarbad, on the Cabul side, which a great Ghilzai chief had just completed. Details of the scene there dwell among the most charming recollections in my mind, but they are vague; for I stopped but a few hours, going up and returning. Many officers who served in that campaign will remember the graceful mansion I refer to, their first halt, I think, after leaving Jellalabad.

And so to my "tale." We rode into our new quarters with a fine appetite, and the mess-cooks leisurely began their preparations.

Before the meal was ready a small group of natives gathered on the terrace, under sanction of Captain Molloy, our staff-interpreter. They were people of condition, dressed in the Persian style—long coats of pushmina-cloth, edged with narrow gold cord, beautifully embroidered on shoulders and chest; fur caps, wide breeches, and high yellow boots. To them arrived Colonel St. John, political officer, and presently the general appeared, eager for his breakfast. He listened with interest to their petition, and courteously dismissed them.

The chief of these visitors lodged a claim to the house we occupied. Mir Afzul had taken it from him by force. It appeared that the claimant was a partisan of that brother of Shere Ali's, who killed his nephew, the Ameer's favourite son, and was killed by him in action. I forget the names and the place, but those interested in Afghan politics know all the painful story, and for others it does not matter.

When Yacoob Khan took the city, he found there the widow of his uncle

with a baby boy. They were forthwith imprisoned in the Arx, or citadel, and remained there till we set them free. Every one at mess was touched when Colonel St. John described his interview with this young prince, now twelve or fourteen years old, a captive from infancy. I know not whether he still lives. Terror and solitude had crushed the lad. His limbs, his complexion reminded one of plants grown in the dark. Suddenly brought into the daylight world; born, as it were, at an age to see, and in a painful sense to understand the million of strange things around, there was great danger that his intellect would fail.

I am aware of no modern instance like this. The imagination cannot fancy what must have been the feelings of this boy, intelligent of nature, when the door he had never passed was opened, and he stepped into the bustling world of Candahar.

The young prince had not been absolutely deprived of a companion. With his uncle's widow and his cousin, Yacoob Khan confined the wife and child of this sirdar, who claimed our quarters. His life was spared on that account, but he lost his property.

General Stewart ordered that the case should be examined, and an arrangement made, if it proved just. This news spread through the city, and forthwith arose a dozen litigants. The original pretender collapsed at once, for he had no better title than Mir Afzul's ladies, though one earlier in date. Colonel St. John was persecuted with all the modern history of Candahar, its invasions and confiscations, the alliances of its inhabitants, the laws of real property, and the decrees of successive governors. Having other complications in hand, he appealed to the general, and our stout old chief, laughing heartily, relegated this question to the native courts. There it would still be disputing hotly, I don't doubt, if the prospect of rupees had not vanished with the sircar. And meanwhile we paid no rent.

I heard an outline of several amongst these claims. One of these stories dwelt in my mind. What I remember is here set down.

Our garden, as was alleged, once belonged to a merchant whom I will call Haidar Khan. He traded largely in Central Asia, transporting Indian and European manufactures and bringing back tea, saltpetre, turquoises, cheap gaudy silks, and Persian goods. Bokhara was his favourite market (may I here use the

license of an expert to suggest that the accent of this word falls upon the second syllable?). When the governor of Candahar, in rebellion against Cabul, thought fit to send letters and presents to the Ameer of Bokhara, he naturally chose Haidar Khan to bear them. No trader had such tact in dealing with the robber chieftains on that long route; no one had suffered so little loss from disease of beasts and slaves.

For some years past, Haidar Khan, now growing old, had ceased to accompany his kafilas. He was rich. His town-house, jealously protected by high blank walls, contained a treasure in its plate and jewellery alone. Very many thousand golden coins lay stored in a secret place which no one knew except his confidential slave: Darics and Philips and Bactrian pieces, which to think of makes the numismatist feel tigrish, Venetian sequins, Austrian ducats, Russian imperials, English sovereigns, the spoil of every race and every age. Accomplished slaves and fair daughters amused the old man's leisure. One care alone oppressed him, and it was of a sort to which Pathans are used.

Haidar's sons had turned out ill, extravagant, undutiful, addicted to the muddy wine of Shiraz, and the bhang of southern infidels. But few of his neighbours had a pleasanter experience, and since the boys had not yet been detected in a conspiracy to murder him, Haidar had still reason to be thankful.

The command of the governor was annoying. In the first place, no respectable trader likes to compromise himself in political intrigue. There was not much danger truly on this score, since the authorities at Herat were friendly, and the clans along the road felt no interest in Ameer or Governor. But the journey would occupy twelve months at least, and Haidar left a thousand cares behind. His money would be safe under protection of the guild—as safe, that is, as money can be in Afghanistan. But the guild would not take charge of personal effects, silver dishes, and gold cups, and jewels. Who could be trusted to guard his slaves when the master was away, and his wild sons skirmished round? Haidar resolved to bury his wealth, and to take the young men with him.

Do not think, be it said in parenthesis, that I exaggerate the riches of this Pathan merchant. It is recorded in history that when the English general made

a call for funds on Shikarpore, forty years ago, thirty thousand pounds were furnished in two hours, and one hundred thousand pounds offered before night. Shikarpore is the next bridge, so to speak, of the Pactolus that flows through Candahar from Central Asia; a place even now not half so large nor half so wealthy, a mere village in comparison two-score years ago. No disturbance, no confiscation, no misgovernment can stop the supply of gold which pours down that channel. For ages, Candahar has been plundered systematically, but the only misfortune which can for a while delay its recovery is the blocking of the road above.

So Haidar Khan set out, with his two sons, and his long train of camels. After many months' journeying he reached Bokhara. The usual good fortune attended him along the road. The most savage of robber chieftains accepted their black-mail without complaint, disarmed by his pleasant shrewdness; they even made him valuable gifts in return. He delivered the letters and the presents, unloaded his merchandise at the Serai, took a house and servants; prepared for a long and profitable trade whilst the Ameer was thinking out his policy, and considering what presents to return.

In some months of delay, Haidar turned his capital over several times. At length all was ready. What reply Bokhara sent to Candahar upon political questions, I am not informed. But the presents consisted of Turkestan and Yarkhundi horses, Bokhara camels and slaves; beside, one may presume, such trifling souvenirs as silks and arms gold-fretted, turquoises, embroidered horse-trappings, etc. With these in charge, Haidar made ready to start for home.

The conduct of his sons at Bokhara has not been recorded; probably, being Afghans, they did some successful trade, and in the intervals compassed as much wickedness as they could find to do. But when it came to ordering the march, Haidar found that the eldest had two Persian women—bought captives, of course—whom he proposed to carry down. This could not be suffered. In Bokhara the Prophet's law against enslaving Moslems is not much regarded, and at Candahar they are not very rigid on the abstract question. But Haidar was a personage. The eyes of the pious rested on him. It would be useless, and indeed dangerous, to plead at Candahar that Shiah heretics are not included amongst Moslem, for there are many Shiahs there, and the Kazilbashis are a powerful community.

A hundred considerations made the old man firm in his denial, and the slaves were left behind; I do not know in what position. Very vicious Haroun looked as he took his place in the caravan.

The Ameer's offerings were all of the highest class. Turkestan horses so punchy, so large eyed, so velvety of coat, so clean of limb, the Persian Shah does not possess. The heads of the Yarkhundis were long as their pedigree; when they arched their necks superbly they could bite a fly upon their chests. The silken fleece of the camels almost swept the ground, and their beautiful eyes, shaded by thick curled lashes, shone through a mane as stately as a lion's. I think I hear a critic murmuring aghast: "What animals are these the Traveller is inventing?" In truth, the descriptions would not apply to usual breeds of horse or camel. But they are true nevertheless.

Led by their syces, the steeds marched loose, the gorgeous saddles and accoutrements safely stored away. But each camel bore a gilded litter with silk curtains, and in each litter rode a slave. Haidar had not thought needful to ask whether these destined for his superiors were Moslems or no. He himself kept with this bevy, and his trustiest servants mounted guard at night. The young men, and especially his two sons, were forbidden to approach. But elderly travellers sleep sound after the day's long march. Pathan youths are enterprising; Eastern girls not less inquisitive, capricious, thoughtless, than our own. The effect of seclusion practised upon female kind is to make the prisoner especially liable to sudden gusts of admiration. To be quite accurate, perhaps, she is not more liable by nature than are her English sisters; but they get so early used to check the feeling, that it is regarded generally as household fun. The oriental girl has no opportunity to use herself to this phenomenon, nor has she any practice of self-restraint. Also it is the instinctive bent of prisoners to cheat their jailor, of young women to rebel against discipline. This impulse is naturally felt more strongly by a pampered slave-maiden than by the free-born. For such a purpose bitter enemies will combine and keep a secret. Moreover—I really must one day indite, with the Editor's permission, a brief essay on the condition, sentiments, moral anatomy of womankind under Moslem rule. Upon no subject whatsoever is such ignorant nonsense current. In twenty years of travel, through lands, for the most part,

where polygamy prevails, I have learned by daily use and hearing the pros and cons—something, at least, of the actual facts; and on a topic so intensely grave, those who think they know the truth should speak out.

From the considerations noted I can believe that Haroun established some sort of compromising relations with one of the slaves. Such a charge was made against him, or rather, against Haidar. It is not necessary to imagine that the relations were criminal in any sort; mere bowing acquaintance, so to put it, would justify a savage punishment in the eyes of the Candahar governor. Haidar Khan was not ignorant of what was passing, for he threatened his son with death if he did not amend. Some time afterwards, next day perhaps, Haroun vanished with his personal followers; the younger son remained.

In due process of time, the kafila reached that point where the road from Farah gives upon the great trade route between Hindostan and Central Asia. Every schoolboy knows—quite as well as he knows many other facts attributed to his omniscience—that Farah is a great strategic position in the midst of that quadrilateral, Herat, Candahar, Ghuzni, Cabul. Owing to circumstances uninteresting to detail, but intelligible enough, the garrison of this place is generally loyal. Farah was held at the moment by a zealous partisan of the Ameer. He was informed, no doubt, of the treasonable correspondence which Haidar carried; what secret of the sort can be maintained in a land which has no telegraph, no penny press, no correspondents, special or other? But his quarters lay some distance from the caravan road, and in the space between dwelt lawless tribes, Atahzai, Alizai, Durani, who will admit no authority to come amongst them. For they live by black-mail, which government officials would appropriate to themselves.

Haidar, therefore, did not dream of peril from the governor of Farah. At the junction of the roads, nevertheless, his caravan was intercepted by overwhelming force. Without discussion of terms, the Ameer's officials seized him and marched the kafila across the hills. Incredible to relate, the robber clans, cheated of their due, made no resistance.

Arrived at Farah, the governor held durbar and tried his prisoners publicly. Haidar Khan, overwhelmed with the evidence and bewildered by the perception that treachery enveloped him on every side, could make no defence. The treason-

able letters were produced. Every slave in the kafila knew facts enough to damn him. Nothing remained but to pass sentence. All Haidar's personal property was confiscated. The presents of Bokhara, slaves, camels, horses, and the rest, were despatched to Cabul—that is to say, thus ran the decree. We may have our doubts whether the Ameer derived one rupee benefit from all this plunder.

Nothing more is said of Haroun and the fatal beauty. Our tale henceforth deals with his younger brother. The theory of Haidar's innocence—innocence in an affair which ruined and killed him!—is based on the supposition that Haroun concocted all the plot, negotiated with the chieftains, secured a free passage for the troops, persuaded the governor to try a dangerous coup. And so, perhaps, he won the stipulated prize, whatever it might have been. But, from one's knowledge of Afghans, one is inclined to think it more probable that the governor rewarded him by cutting off the traitor's head—much more probable still, that he poisoned him. And one may almost take it for granted that the Helen of this strife was transferred, with her comrades, to the governor's harem, together with all goods and treasures which had not been already looted by his faithful servants.

In consideration of his virtuous character and his high position in the mercantile community, Haidar Khan was not put to death. His captor held him to ransom—for the profit of the Ameer, of course. A large sum was named, but one the great trader could afford without serious inconvenience. Accordingly, he drew a bill upon his guild. There was difficulty in finding trustworthy persons to receive the cash, since the best adherents of the governor would have been massacred at Candahar. At length the younger son was commissioned to fetch it, under surveillance of some neutral individuals. He went, and did not return; neither did his colleagues.

After waiting an unreasonable time, Haidar Khan wrote to the guild direct, telling all the circumstances. In the leisurely course of things prevailing in Afghanistan, the cash arrived, under charge of honest merchants trading with Farah; in the meanwhile, various shrewd but painful processes had been tried to stimulate the captive's ingenuity. The guild explained that Haidar's son had duly presented himself, and had received the money; a copy of his receipt was enclosed.

It acknowledged ten times the sum demanded; by the addition of a cypher, this dutiful youth had obtained nearly all his father's fortune, and vanished with it into space.

In terrible distress and anxiety, Haidar Khan returned to Candahar. There he was instantly arrested as a traitor; the main cause of suspicion being in the acquiescence of the Durani sirdars in his capture on the road, to be explained only by Haidar's strong personal influence with them. Long before this, the governor had made up his mind and sequestered all that was left, town house, villa, accomplished slaves, fair daughters, and the rest. As for the silver dishes and gold cups, they may be buried yet, a treasure to be disinterred, with many more, when the Russians "Haussmannise" this imperial city.

After languishing some months in prison Haidar Khan was tried and found innocent. The next step was to make the governor disgorge, if possible. Whilst Haidar engaged in the beginning of this hopeless task, the governor of Farah marched on Candahar, with a swarm of Durani tribesmen, who had suddenly turned loyal. They fought some successful battles, and the city capitulated. This was final ruin. From the Ameer's lieutenant, Haidar had no mercy to expect. He died. But the sentence of the court which pronounced him guiltless of the crime for which he had lost his property was the only legal instrument bearing on his case. The claim was not forgotten by his heirs, when General Stewart rashly talked of paying rent for our quarters. But there were other pretensions, both older and newer. I incline to believe that if the title of that garden had been exhaustively gone through, some generations of lawyers would have been harmlessly consumed in the interesting task.

DAFFODIL.

CHAPTER I. THE PEACH-APPLE FARM.

"Oh, Mother, the peach-apples are ripe! I have just found two on the path, eaten into holes by the birds."

"Oh, Daughter dear, now we know why the blackbirds were singing so sweetly this morning! We shall have the apples for dinner, if Brockley and Sukey will but give their consent!"

The two ladies were walking up and down the paths of a rather wild and picturesque garden. The elder, who leaned upon a staff and gazed around complacently over the

gold rims of her spectacles, was wont to delight in thinking that this was the only real garden in existence. Garlands of creepers swung from one high wall to another ; luxuriant crops of fruit waxed honey-sweet in the sun year after year ; and flowers, following a good deal their own sweet will, grew brilliant and tall among the trees.

Its owners considered the place a paradise, and Brockley, the gardener, was looked on as one of the wonders of the age, having constructed this beautiful confusion, out of his genius for laziness, upon an original plan of his own.

The farm was named from its exceeding great yearly crops of delicious peach-apples. Not only in the garden did the trees stand sweetening the air and enriching it with tender pinks and whites in the spring-time, and in the autumn with flashes of russet-red, but they also mustered strongly in the big moss-eaten orchard, and marched in double file down a narrow grassy alley to the river-side. It was an event in the year of the simple owners of the farm when the blackbirds had declared that the peach-apples were ripe.

The old lady was Mrs. Marjoram, mistress of the farm, a little person so small and slight that she might have been taken for the fairy godmother in a nursery tale. It was amusing to think of her as the parent of the "Daughter dear" who stood beside her, blandly surveying the marks of the riot of the blackbirds.

For Daughter was abundant in person as her mother was spare, with a particularly full-blown appearance which the style of her attire exaggerated. Her skirts were voluminous and trailed a little behind her, the points of her collar lay wide apart at the neck, her blonde hair was brushed out at the sides and looped negligently at the back of her head. Her plump homely face, with the cheeks tinged to the complexion of the favourite apples, expressed good-humour, simplicity, and a little melancholy.

Only in their speech did the mother and daughter resemble each other, in a certain soft, loose way of uttering their words and a singing intonation which threw their sentences into a kind of rhythm. Even the three old servants, Brockley, Sukey, and the cook, had acquired this trick of speech, probably out of respect for their superiors.

Sukey, the ancient housemaid, now came up the path with a foreign letter addressed to Mrs. Marjoram. Sukey, though called a maid was in reality a matron, who, having known the trouble of a bad husband in her

youth, still nursed a sort of wrathful grief, and was treated by the family with great consideration on account of it. Her sallow brow and sullen black eyes were seldom lit up by a smile, yet she had a grim devotion to her employers, and to all who were in any way connected with them. In acknowledgment of this devotion was the fact that no step was taken in the household without her approbation.

"Sukey," said her mistress timidly as she broke the seal of the letter, "we are thinking of having some apples for dinner to-day."

Sukey frowned at the tree, glanced at her mistress, and looked down the path with an air of resignation.

"I shall speak to Brockley, ma'am," she said, much as a nurse might promise a child, "I shall ask your mamma to see about it."

"Oh, Daughter, the little girl from Ceylon will be here this evening," cried Mrs. Marjoram with an excited glance over the rims of her spectacles.

"Will she, Mother dear ? Then, Sukey, you may tell Harry to have the brougham at the door at three. That will give us time to go to the station before dinner. And, oh, Mother, how lucky she is to be here for the first of the peach-apples !"

When Harry brought the brougham, the two ladies were waiting at the door of the farmhouse ; a door curtained with roses unpruned by the sparing knife of the original genius Brockley ; and Daughter remarked to Mother that the brougham had an untidy appearance.

"Hush !" whispered the venerable lady ; "you forget that if we do not go for her the child will be left forlorn on the world, or at least the platform. The friends who bring her are going further by the train. And Harry was winking as he drove up to the door."

When Harry was seen winking excitedly it was understood that at that particular moment he could not be interfered with. He was a man with a large head and shoulders, but the limbs and stature of a little boy. Harry on his feet upon the ground was ridiculous, but seated upon his box he was powerful among men. And the family viewed him only on his box, and respected his weaknesses. When Harry chose to bring them the brougham looking nice, there was jubilee in his mistresses' hearts ; but if either of those ladies were to say, "Harry, the brougham is untidy," then must the brougham remain untidy for a period of many days to come.

"Where is Milky White?" cried Daughter.

Milky White was a huge, white, villainous-looking bull-dog, greatly beloved by his owners, and as obstinate and whimsical as Harry himself. It was the part of Milky White to run half under the brougham all the way whithersoever it might travel in the course of an afternoon; and should Milky White be in a malicious humour and desert the carriage, then must the carriage follow Milky White till, his malice spent, he might consent to resume his post between the wheels.

Milky White appearing and getting into position, the brougham rolled away through the lovely ripening country, past blue openings in dense forest glades, fields dotted with red kine, and golden hay-cocks clambered over by the shouting urchins who twisted the straw ropes wherewith the farmer was binding them. A pond full of noisy ducks, under an overhanging hedge, a cluster of rosy children swinging on a wooden gate, a group of frolicsome colts in a paddock, and a long string of inquisitive goslings with a silly, long-necked, garrulous mother goose at their head, all saluted in their own way the two simple ladies as they travelled through some few miles of fair rural country in the brougham which was not as they could have wished it to be, Mother looking mildly out of one window and Daughter looking blandly out of the other, while Harry winked viciously in the sun on his box.

X— was a busy seaport town with crowded thoroughfares. As soon as the brougham entered the streets, gentle Mrs. Marjoram began to hold on with both hands to keep the vehicle steady.

"Mother dear," said Daughter, "this only tires you, and it does not make any difference really."

"Don't tell me!" said Mrs. Marjoram with mild testiness. "Only for this plan of mine Harry's love of rutty lanes would have been the death of us before now."

"Oh, Milky White! Milky White!" cried Daughter, as the animal was suddenly seen charging into the middle of a battle of curs which was raging at a corner. The brougham was immediately turned and driven after the deserter, up one street and down another, till, the dogs having been dispersed and lost sight of, Harry pulled up and paused for orders.

"Drive home immediately," cried Daughter. "He will have found the road and we shall overtake him on the way."

"Certainly," said Mother. "Were we to go on without him he would be terribly offended."

"But we may be late for little Daffodil," reflected Daughter.

"Harry must drive quickly and make up the time," said Mother.

Back went the brougham all the pleasant way to the Peach Apple Farm. No Milky White was to be seen, and at last Daughter hung anxiously out of the window, calling to a labourer on the road.

"Hi, my man! Have you seen a large white bull-dog pass this way since morning?"

The man grinned and rested upon his spade, then, stooping, glanced under the brougham.

"There he be, missus, sure enough; unless it's his twin brother you be lookin' for!"

Mother, Daughter, and Harry had all to dismount and peer under the brougham before they could persuade themselves that Milky White had been really all the time in his old place between the wheels, having withdrawn further than usual into shelter and maliciously curled up his tail out of sight. "Thank Heaven!" murmured the ladies, and with grateful hearts resumed their seats and travelled once more in the direction of X—.

As they threaded the streets a second time a bright little face gazing solitarily from the windows of a fly looked full in Daughter's eyes which were staring gently at the bustle of the town; looked, and flew past; and the carriage stopped at the station to find that the train had arrived half an hour ago, and the people who had come by it had dispersed.

Mother and Daughter gazed at each other in dismay; while Harry winked vengefully at Milky White, and flicked at him longingly with his whip.

"Perhaps she did not come," suggested Daughter.

"Could she have returned by the train, finding there was no one to meet her?" said Mother.

"Oh, Milky White! Milky White!" murmured Daughter, "what trouble you sometimes lead us into!"

One of the railway officials now pitied their bewilderment.

"Perhaps you will be glad to know," he said, "that a young lady arrived by the train who hired a fly to take her to the Peach Apple Farm."

Mother and Daughter breathed sighs of

relief. "Clever little girl!" they cried, amazed and delighted at such courage and decision; and they were soon bowling through the country once again, with Milky White running dutifully beneath them reflecting delightedly on his late waggish trick.

Said Daughter as they drove along, "I wonder if we could get a hole cut in the floor of the brougham so that we might see a little of his back as he runs."

"But his back is so light-coloured, and so is the road," objected Mother.

"As if I should not distinguish a bit of his back from a bit of the road; the back that I know so well!" cried Daughter with the slightest shade of reproach in her voice.

CHAPTER II. DAFFODIL.

SUKEY met the ladies at the door with an unwonted smile, and pointed to a trunk, and a large open cage that stood by its side in the hall.

"She's in the garden, figuring away among the flowers as if she'd been born there. And the bird is as much at home as herself."

"What bird?" asked Mrs. Marjoram.

"Oh, a bird in fancy feathers that she has brought. You will see it soon enough."

The ladies hurried to the garden and met a slim young figure coming down the path, the fair head turned away caressing a foreign bird of brilliant plumage that nestled on her shoulder. She was clothed in clinging black draperies and heavy fur jacket, but her hat had been thrown off, and a delicate head, with bright hair ruffled, had caught some falling blossoms as it brushed the blooming creepers that hung out of the trees.

"So you are little Daffodil," said the old lady, taking a small slight hand which had quivered into her own.

"Yes," said the visitor, with a quick glance from one to another of her hostesses, "and you are," she hesitated, balancing on a word like a bird on a twig, "my English friend."

"Indeed we are," said Mother heartily, having shared the girl's momentary embarrassment. Truly it was not easy to give a name to the connexion between her guest and herself, and the young stranger had gone right to the old lady's heart when she called her simply her English friend.

"We were grieved to hear of the death of your dear father," began Mrs. Marjoram, wishing to be sympathetic.

"Don't," said the girl vehemently, while

a flush of passion lit up her face momentarily, and then left it inexpressibly pale and mournful. Indeed, the changes in this young countenance caused infinite amazement to Daughter, who remained quite absorbed in watching the smiles and rose-coloured lights flying into it and out of it with supernatural swiftness, and the pale gleams and mournful shades which chased them and replaced them as they came and went. The whole face was warmed into vivid beauty of colour one moment, and the next was almost pallid in its dreamy sadness.

"You must be tired, dear," said Daughter.

"Yes," said Daffodil, "but I cannot rest till I have become used to the place. Will you take me all round your fields, and through your gardens, and over your house, and then I shall have a feeling of knowing where I am."

"I will show you all I can before dinner," said Daughter, "and then you must be content until morning."

"And—your mother?" said Daffodil, bending her graceful head towards the old lady.

"Oh, Mother will get into her great chair and rest," said Daughter, pleased at the stranger's solicitude for the little mother who was her pet; and Daffodil, glancing from one friend to another, as if interested deeply in a tender family intercourse of which she knew nothing by experience, placed her little hand on Daughter's substantial arm and followed her lightly along the path.

They walked together, two figures strongly contrasting, through fields and meadows and orchards, and down the long green alley to the river where all the russet apple-trees stood painted against the pale golden background of the evening sky, and the grassy path was a lane of shade running through ethereal light. Here two natures sprung to life in different climes had come together to enjoy almost equally an exquisite moment, yet were as different in their ways of tasting the enjoyment as in their forms and faces, which might have suggested to an observant blackbird trilling overhead, the prose and poetry of humanity travelling side by side along the high-road of life. At the foot of the alley the river lapped round mossy stones and the dying sun cast fire down among the lilies that lay so still and cool in a dark pool of the stream; and Daffodil broke loose from her guide with a cry of delight, and poised

herself on a wet stone, much as the water-fowl were accustomed to do.

"You like the place, Daffodil? You must find it very different from Ceylon."

"I loved Ceylon," said the girl, "and I was wild and angry at having to leave it. I said I should hate England; but I see this country is beautiful; and I could love it if I belonged to it. I never tasted such freshness in my life before. Ceylon is all softness and brilliance, but there is a dewiness in your world that is more delicious than I can tell you."

"England is very pretty, and the Peach Apple Farm is greatly admired," said Daughter in her homely way; yet she felt the young girl's thrill of rapture and caught some glimpse of the spirit which lived behind the changeful eyes that now glowed on her. Her manner could however be in no way influenced to any change.

"Why did you think you must hate England?"

"I said it to my guardian because I had no friend but him. I could not bear to go away from him."

"What is he like?" asked Daughter after a pause.

"I thought you knew him, as he sent me to you, being his friends."

"Oh yes!" said Daughter uneasily, "I knew him long ago. But my memory is short, and people change so much besides."

"What is he like?" repeated Daffodil. "He is like nothing but himself. I can show you his photograph; but that will not help you very much."

"You love him greatly?"

"He was always good to me, and he is all I have had to love since—"

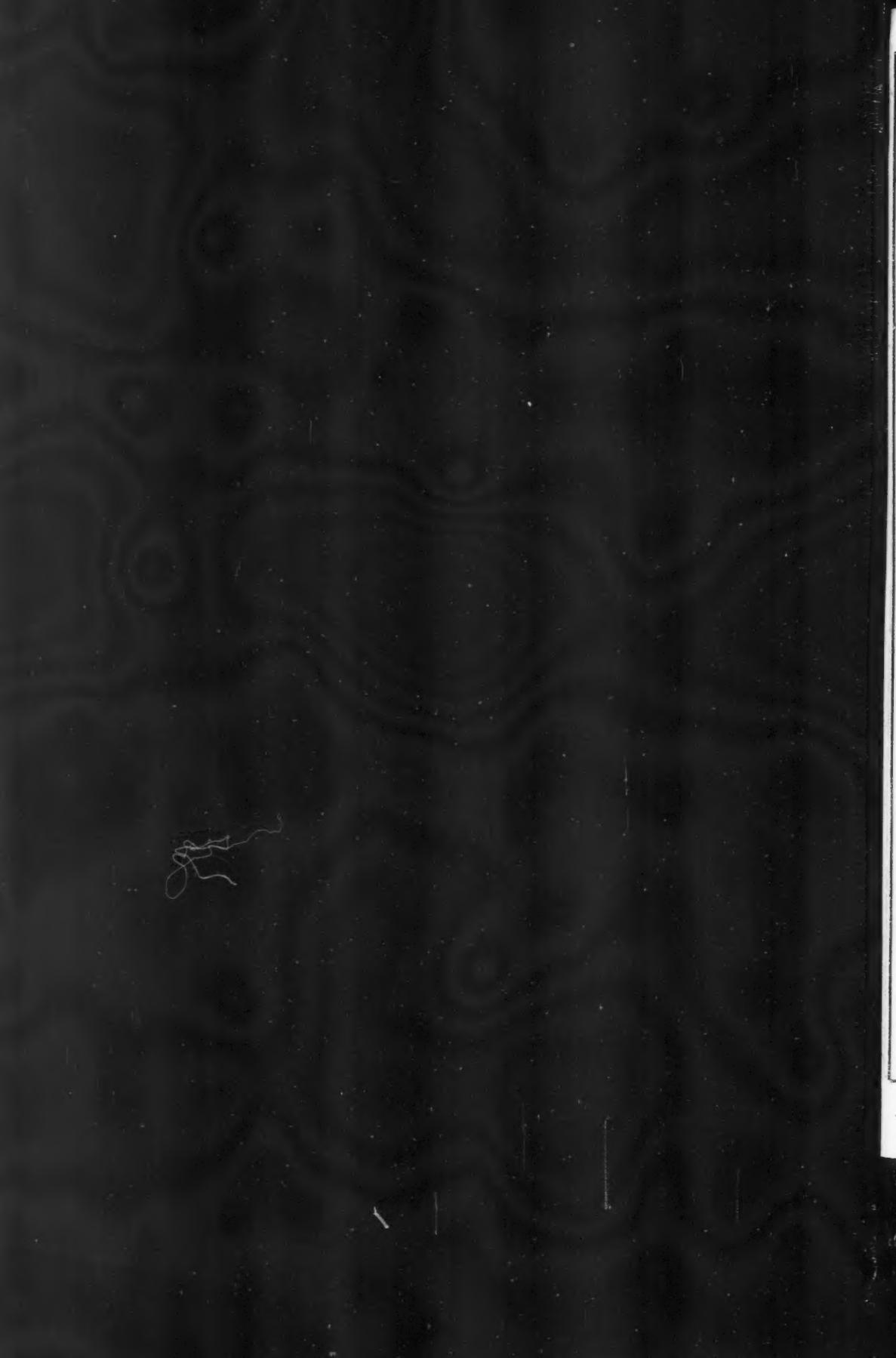
An abrupt break, an extinction of light in the face told that the subject which could not be touched had been approached. Daughter glanced at the sables clinging round the slender figure and did not ask, "Since when?" A certain reticence on her own part helped her to understand reserve in another; and her thoughts went back to Daffodil's guardian who at one time had been no stranger to her. She had wronged herself in saying that her memory was short; but there had been truthful meaning in the words which followed that statement. She did not choose to talk about that old friend however, any more than Daffodil was willing to speak of the father who was lost to her. And Daughter's speech for the rest of the ramble was made up of trite

replies to Daffodil's novel questions as to the tintings of English landscapes and the caprices of English clouds and streams.

The drawing-room and dining-room at the Peach Apple Farm were as old-fashioned in their arrangements as if they had been shut up and not entered for fifty years. A few stiff-necked wooden-faced ancestors looked down on the dinner-table with a wan and hungry gaze, as if perishing for their share of fat capons and juicy hams. The drawing-room carpet was worn almost as bare as the back of Milky White, and bleached to nearly the same shade of colour. Ornaments of rice upon cardboard made by Mrs. Marjoram in her youth still held their place as decorations on the mantelpiece, and an enormous scrap-book on a side-table begun rather more than a century ago now held between its bulging covers all the oddities that could be snipped out of here and there in the intervals of a hundred years. When Daffodil sat down before this extraordinary volume it pleased her almost as much in a different way as the lilies in the river had done; and over its pages she was presented to the gentlemen of the Marjoram family.

First of these came father, a mild bald old man who had spent most of his time ambling quietly from one market to another, attending meetings at X— and feeling himself generally useful in the country. Next came his eldest son, tall, thin, elderly, with a pinched nose, fond of books, and of sitting on the banks of the river, and very handy at doing anything at all, provided it was in no way serviceable to anybody. And third and last came the second son, a middle-aged attorney of the town of X—. Marjoram and Company he was called, for as Marjoram and Company were the words on the brass plate upon his door, and as he was known to have no partner, it was generally supposed he must believe himself a plural noun. Marjoram and Company was a square man with a broad white face and tufts of red hair springing up like short flames around his forehead. When newly dressed and placid he had a sleek look, but when he was excited the flames gradually erected themselves on his head with startling effect. All three gentlemen smiled benignly on Daffodil, who, as she glanced from the gigantic scrap-book to each in turn, felt that she would like to snip them out of their places and paste them cunningly on its pages.

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IMPORTANT FAMILY MEDICINE.

TRADE

NORTON'S

MARK,

CAMOMILE PILLS,

THE

MOST CERTAIN PRESERVER OF HEALTH,

A MILD, YET SPEEDY, SAFE, AND

EFFECTUAL AID IN CASES OF INDIGESTION
AND ALL STOMACH COMPLAINTS;

AND, AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE, A

PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD AND SWEETENER OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power of the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain that if we could always keep the stomach right we should only die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations; amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a tension or feeling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pain in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels; in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some time to calm and collect themselves; yet for all this the mind is exhilarated

without much difficulty; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems—nothing can more speedily, or with more certainty, effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste and a pleasing degree of warmth, and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and

which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers; and when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine, must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstances, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. By the word tonic is meant a medicine

which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body, which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effect in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick-rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more, did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid; we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native production; if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by

their use ; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess ; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach ; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed ; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed ; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever so often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the bur-

den thus imposed upon it, that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal : it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter ; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should immediately be sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether ; no better friend can be found—no, none which will perform the task with greater certainty, than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed, that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted, and it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted that, by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy OLD AGE.

On account of their volatile properties, they must be kept in bottles ; and if closely corked their qualities are neither impaired by time nor injured by any change of climate whatever. Price 13*½*d. and 2*s.* 9*d.* each, with full directions. The large bottle contains the quantity of three small ones, or **PILLS** equal to fourteen ounces of **CAMOMILE FLOWERS**.

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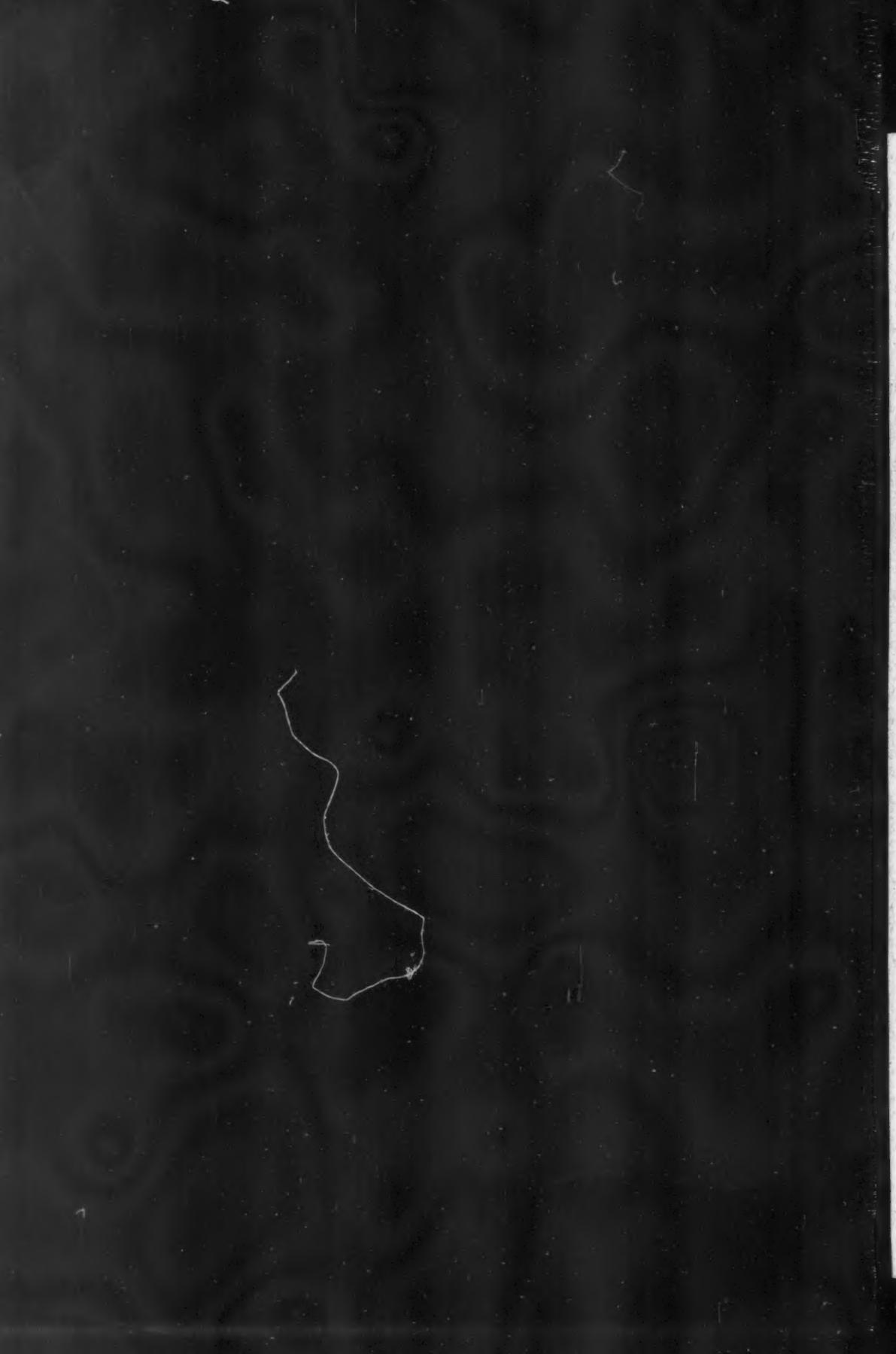
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PROGRESS DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF PAST AND PRESENT QUINQUENIUM.

| PAST. | | | PRESENT. | | |
|-------|--------------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
| YEAR. | SUM ASSURED. | PREMIUM. | YEAR. | SUM ASSURED. | PREMIUM. |
| 1873 | £ 313,120 | £ 10,060 | 1878 | £ 492,340 | £ 15,039 |
| 1874 | 274,105 | 9,324 | 1879 | 470,615 | 15,172 |
| 1875 | 408,680 | 13,162 | 1880 | 544,841 | 18,845 |

THE RESULTS FOR 1881 TO DATE OF PUBLICATION HEREOF ARE HIGHLY SATISFACTORY.

EXAMPLES OF YEARLY PAYMENTS EXTINGUISHED BY APPLICATION OF PART OF THE BONUS TO THAT PURPOSE.

| NO. OF POLICY. | ORIGINAL PREMIUM. | PRESENT PREMIUM. | ORIGINAL SUM ASSURED. | PRESENT SUM ASSURED. |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8,595 | £ 78 7 6 | Nil | £ 3,000 | £ 4,813 0 0 |
| 6,004 | 24 10 10 | Nil | 1,000 | 1,605 11 0 |
| 5,085 | 23 10 10 | Nil | 1,000 | 1,607 3 0 |

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